

AN AFFRAY - THE ARREST OF WILLIAM L. CHAPLIN.

We copy from the *National Intelligencer* of last Saturday, the following account of a transaction which has excited much sensation in this community

ARREST OF RUNAWAY SLAVES—The police of this city succeeded on Thursday night, after a severe conflict, in arresting a white man named *William L. Chaplin*, and a runaway slave named *Alex*, the former being in the act of conveying the slave who was captured, and another named *Garland*, who made his escape, out of the District and the ownership of their masters, towards a free State.

The police officers having watched the movements of Chaplin, and seen him leave the city about ten o'clock in a carriage, which he drove himself, traced him to a point on the Montgomery road near the residence of Francis P. Blair, Esq. Here the officers, Handy, Wollard, Davis, Cox, and Captain Goddard, attempted to stop the carriage, in which were the two runaway negroes. On the attempt being made by Mr W. Smith, who accompanied the officers, to seize the reins held by Chaplin, the latter fired a pistol ball at Smith, which passed through his hat, without injuring him. With the aid of Mr Richard Butt, who also accompanied the officers, Chaplin was secured, after a desperate resistance. The runaways in the carriage having each a revolver, fired several times at the officers, who also fired at the negroes. Not less than twenty-seven shots were fired, and the fight continued for five or six minutes.

"The captured negro was slightly wounded in the back, and would undoubtedly have been killed had not the bullet lodged in his watch, and so protected him from a deadly shot. It is wonderful that none of the officers were killed, or seriously injured. Mr. Butt was slightly wounded in the arm. Neither officers Wollard, Handy, Davis, Cox, or Captain Goddard, was injured. The firing was altogether in the dark there were, however, nine bullet holes in the carriage. It was supposed that *Garland*, the negro who made his escape, was severely if not mortally wounded, but we learned at ten o'clock last night that he was only wounded in the hand and it was probable he would give himself up in the course of last night. *Alex* and the abductor, *Chaplin*, were both committed to jail yesterday by Justice Goddard. We understand that *Chaplin* has resided in this city for the last two years, he is a man of education, and is said to be from the State of New York."

Of course, the truth cannot be ascertained, till a legal investigation be had.

The transaction, so soon as it became generally known, produced great excitement, and a rumor was industriously circulated that Mr Chaplin was connected with the *National Era* office, and that we were in some way implicated in the affair. Threats of violence were openly denounced against our office and ourselves, and efforts were made to get up a mob, but the friends of order, who knew us, soon corrected all misapprehension, and the conduct of the Mayor and intelligent citizens generally convinced the disorderly that no outbreak would be tolerated. The newspapers circulating in the District, with an honorable regard for order, contradicted the false rumor to which we have referred, and refrained from any comment calculated to aggravate popular indignation. While the excitement prevailed, although urged to publish a card disclaiming any connection with the transaction, we did not choose to do so, as we are not accustomed to do anything under compulsion. But, as the storm has blown over, and the community is now calm, it is right and proper to state frankly our view of the late deplorable event.

And first, we would do justice to Mr Chaplin. He has been known to us, as to the Anti-Slavery men throughout the country, for many years. He is a brave, warm hearted, sincere man, who has long devoted all his energies to the Anti-Slavery cause, without reference to his own interests, entirely independent of all sordid or mercenary motives. His statement of the matter is yet to be made.

In his views of policy he has differed from the great majority of the Abolitionists of the country. He dissented from the Liberty Men who nominated John P. Hale for the Presidency, and from the Free Soil men who sustained Martin Van Buren, and, as is well known in his own State, has been identified with that class of Abolitionists who hold that Congress has constitutional power to abolish slavery in the States.

When visited by the Mayor and Justice Goddard, he stated to them that he had never had any connection with the *National Era* office, or the paper, that, while regarding me with friendly feelings, he had always differed from me on several points, especially in relation to transactions like that in which he had just been engaged, that, in a word, the *Era* did not go far enough for him and his friends. The statement thus generously made is true. We could wish it were otherwise. Would to God that he and his friends had been able to concur in our views of the proper course of action to be pursued in relation to Slavery. Had they done so, Charles T. Torrey would not have ended his days in a penitentiary, nor would William L. Chaplin now be lying in jail, but both might have been at this moment engaged in a wide and an important field of labor, where their intelligent and philanthropic efforts, directed to the change of the great heart of the nation, would have done far more to promote the emancipation of the whole slave population, than was ever done by all attempts to secure the escape of a few slaves—attempts which cut one off in the prime of his days, and which may doom the other, in the maturity of his years, to a life-imprisonment.

We shall write no new article to define our position. We do not manufacture opinions to suit an occasion. Actively engaged as an editor in the Anti Slavery Cause for the last fifteen or sixteen years, we entertain to-day the same views, substantially, of the mode of action proper in relation to slavery, which we did when we became an opponent of the evil.

In the year 1844, an Anti-Slavery Convention at Albany, New York, issued an address, containing many excellent sentiments, and some things which we deemed objectionable, among the latter, an approval of the conduct of certain citizens of the North in going into slave States and "running off" slaves, as it is called. Being at that time editor of the *Cincinnati Morning Herald*, we expressed our dissent strongly, and gave our reasons therefor, as follows:

"The human mind is so constituted that it will attach something dishonorable to that which has to be done in the dark, or by stratagem. He who enters a slave State for the sake of helping off slaves, can scarcely avoid practicing deception, and of course becoming criminal in the pursuit of a philanthropic object. At all events, if detected, no matter whether he may have uttered a falsehood or not, he appears in the light of a man aiming to secure his object by sinister means, and this of itself creates a strong prejudice against him, reflects odium upon the party with which he is identified, and embarrasses its operations."

Again "The action of such persons can hardly be preserved from stratagem; it must always appear sinister, it can do nothing towards the extinction of slavery. It must embarrass other and more efficient operations." [This was said many years ago, and we intend no personal application now.]